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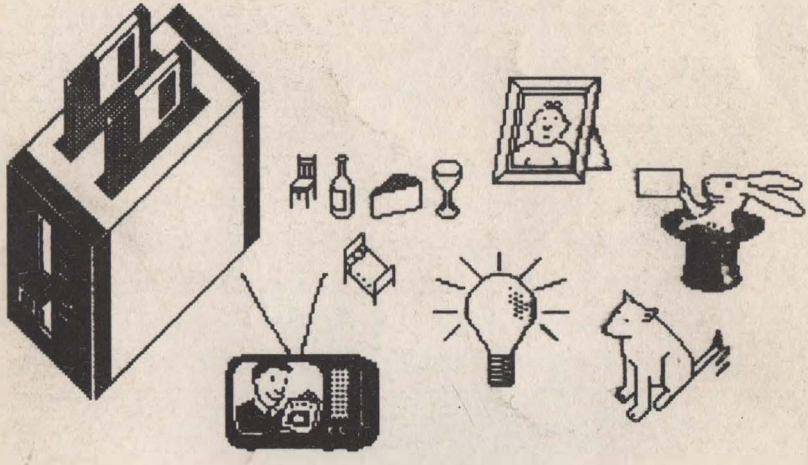

Paul Rogers
Fred Thelonious Baker
Pier Paolo Pasolini
Madrid
2-3-5

free issue

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VOX

This time around we feature two innovative bass players with more in common than a length of pony tail; a Pasolini retrospective and a sharp eyeball on Madrid, plus fiction. And still for nothing . . .

CTB/April 1991

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cover
'Ideas for the Virtual Home'

editor/publisher/designed and struggled with
Chris Blackford

If you find mistakes in this magazine, please remember that they are there for a purpose. We try to publish something for everyone, and some people are always looking for mistakes.

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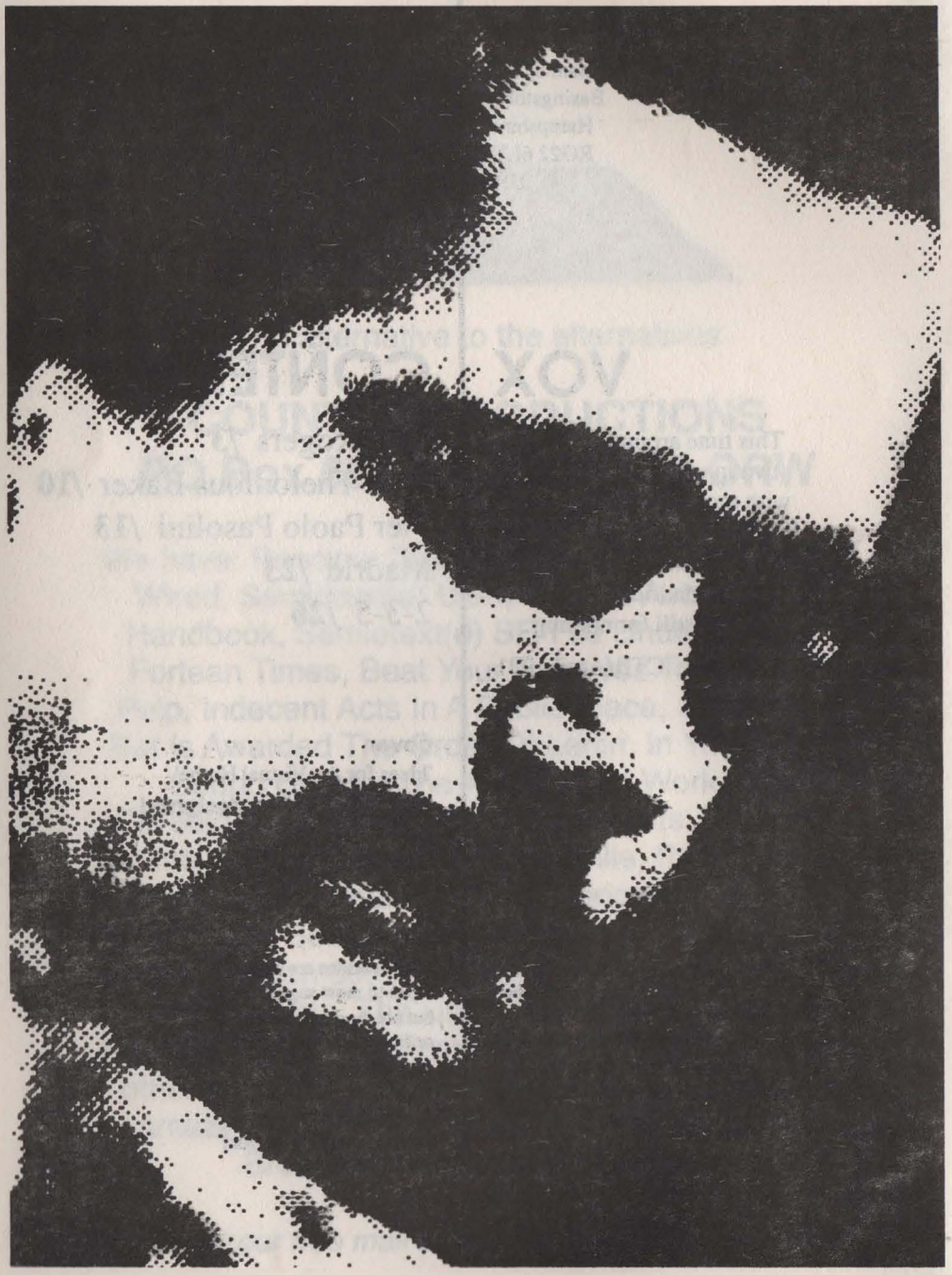

free, but not that Free

text: **Chris Blackford**

The first time I saw Paul Rogers was about twelve years ago, appropriately at the time when popular music was struggling to contain the less malleable aspects of the new wave. I seem to remember Paul had closely cropped hair and some kind of hefty footwear - also in keeping with the times. He was part of a rhythm section playing behind Stan Tracey and Art Theman. Every so often Paul would get the chance to solo, and while he delivered the punchy lines Art would be smiling to himself or raising an eyebrow at Stan Tracey, who was also listening with a sort of fatherly interest. It was evident then that if jazz was going to contain this young man, it was going to have to widen its parameters.

These days Paul is less often seen in that type of mainstream context, being more at home in the company of improvising players like Keith Tippett, Paul Dunmall and Tony Levin, otherwise known as Mujician. His bass playing is still as forceful as ever, though years of dedication to the instrument have extended his technique to a point where few other players have reached. Paul, however, still goes on redefining what's possible on the instrument, and largely to an ignorant or indifferent public.

When you tell somebody you're going to see Paul Rogers they immediately think it's the singer with Free, but that's about as much as they have in common. The lot of the musician engaged in improvised music is still as precarious and impecunious in this country as it was when the likes of Joe Harriott laid the foundations about thirty years ago. But a small audience can be an appreciative one, especially when the player is Paul Rogers and the performance is spiced with pinches of deft humour.

The first thing that must strike somebody

watching you play is your impressive technique, your inventive technique. Has this been built on a classical training?

No, I'm self-taught. For a few years though, I stayed at home and practised all day. In fact I still practise a lot.

Was the double bass your first instrument?

Yes, that's right. I can play other instruments but I don't. I can't see the point. When I compose music I compose from the bass. I sit down at a piano to maybe get the harmonics, but the basic lines that I would write would come from the double bass. I decided early on that I didn't want to take lessons from anybody or go to music college and study because I didn't want anybody else to impose their way of playing on me. Classical playing is a particular style which I didn't want to play. I've studied classical books for the double bass and looked at the pictures (laughs) but I found how I wanted to play by doing it myself. As many bass players as there are, there are that many ways of playing the double bass. I don't see the need for lessons if you've got the discipline yourself. I mean, I can do all the things now that I wanted to do when I first started.

What age are we talking about here? When did you start?

I first got a double bass when I was seventeen and a half years old. I saved up some money and got it on HP. It was a plywood double bass, a pile of crap. It was like a wardrobe, but I got that from the local music shop. Then I moved to London about eight months later and started playing gigs.

I presume that you were listening to other bass players. If you weren't getting lessons formally I presume you were getting them off records, so to speak?

Yes, that's right. When you read about jazz bass players like Ray Brown they learned from records and off the radio.

I decided early on that I didn't want to take lessons from anybody or go to music college and study because I didn't want anybody else to impose their way of playing on me.

When I was fifteen I got into improvised music. Before I got into jazz I was into improvised music. People like Tony Oxley, Evan Parker and John Stevens were on the radio. That blew me away and I thought - fantastic. Then I probably read somewhere that some straight-ahead musician said, 'That's all very well, but first you've got to learn how to play jazz before you can do that.' So I thought, 'Oh really, well I better learn that.' So I got into Oscar Pettiford, who's probably my favourite bass player, and Mingus and Paul Chambers. I could list all the bass players I like. Jimmy Blanton is one of the greatest bass players of all time even though he died after making a few records. He, and say, Slam Stewart did certain things that actually changed the

course of bass playing. I should also mention Scott La Faro and early Gary Peacock, late '50s early '60s, they were phenomenal players, too.

You sound very single-minded about what you wanted to achieve. I imagine you were also trying to extend the possibilities of the bass?

By not hanging out with bass players at that time or being told what a bass player is supposed to do I wasn't aware that there was a limit to the instrument. I just saw it as musical instrument to make music on.

If I was worried about what people thought I wouldn't be playing improvised music. I'd be playing something that everyone liked - and getting a brown nose.

I've always thought that. I've never seen it as a bass in the back of the room, you know, while the horn players wank in front doing their ego-trip and the bass player's at the back doing a few chord progressions.

Would you say that improvised music is a lot more democratic or egalitarian than conventional forms of jazz in terms of allowing all instruments to participate equally. For example, the bass player is not just part of the rhythm section.

With improvised music you play what you feel is necessary, regardless of the instrument, to make that music a whole thing. It's only the way you perceive it, somebody else will do it in a different way. So, if I want to play in the higher harmonics up in the top of the range of the saxophone I'll do that, or I'll play down in the bottom range of the piano. Or I'll de-tune my strings if I hear a sound . . . I don't actually hear a sound then play it, I'm playing and the sounds come. I know what I'm doing. You've got to know what you're doing when you're improvising, but also you don't know what you're doing. You can't make a decision all the time, things are happening so quickly . . . you are making those decisions, I suppose, but you're not aware of making them. It becomes instinctive.

Do you ever feel that you're still having to crusade to get improvised music heard; do you feel that you're trying to convert people to get them interested?

Well no. I don't give a shit. I don't care. I'm playing the music and it's up to people to get off on it or not. Tony Levin came up with a good one. It's like colours. You have a favourite colour but you can't really explain why it's your favourite colour. Music is like that. I'm mean there are some people who are never going to like improvised music, or Oscar Peterson or Beethoven or Mozart. They can't handle it. If I was worried about what people thought I wouldn't be playing improvised music. I'd be playing something that everyone liked - and getting a brown nose.

*Last year you wrote a piece for sextet called **Anglo-American Sketches** which was obviously not entirely based on*

improvisation. I gather the work was autobiographical, so to speak?

Yes, I lived in Dallas for a while and New York and the Bronx for a long time. Well, not a long time, but long enough. And I've lived in different parts of London like

Brixton and Whitechapel. And I suppose where you live influences the way you are and therefore what you write. I'd written tunes in Britain and in America, and so when you approach the Arts Council you've got to have something other than just the music.

A concept?

A concept. So I thought, what the fuck can I think of? And I thought well it's just musical sketches written when I was in Britain and America. I thought, Anglo-American Sketches sounds all right, you know, two 'A's, that goes. And fortunately they liked the idea.

What sort of music feeds into your ideas for composition or improvisation?

If you want to know what I listen to?

Yes, okay.

Well, at the moment I've been listening to a lot of twentieth century classical music. I've always liked that more than any other type of classical music. People like Stravinsky, Bartok, Messiaen, Ligeti, all those people. I'm not really a great fan of people like Cage and Stockhausen. I like them but they don't really feature greatly in my listening habits. Also I listen to people like Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, Cecil Taylor. I've stopped listening to a lot of jazz because it's got incredibly boring.

I know this is a difficult sort of question to answer, but I'll ask it nevertheless. We know where and from whom free music or improvised music came, but I wonder, is it possible to say where it's going? You're a generation on from the likes of Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, Tony Oxley, can you sense where the younger generation of free players is taking the music?

You see this is a problem we all have. As soon as you can define what it is you're doing you've stopped improvising. Once you can say, 'Right, I do this', you've put a limit on it. You've put a sort of parameter around it. And I don't believe in doing that.

I heard that you've been playing some classical music recently.

(Laughs) Yes, when I was in New York. It was quite amazing. I was in a chamber group of about eighteen with a guy called Harold Siletsky (?)
How do you spell that?

No idea. He'd written this music, some strange kind of shit like 42 tone music or something. He was a bloke in his mid-60s, I suppose. Somehow he'd got hold of my number because he was doing some improvisation, and he said, 'You can play classical music, can't you?' So I said, 'Of

course I can' (laughs). We did this piece of his and then at the gig he pulled out this Brahms. Well, I didn't have a fucking clue. I had to sight read this stuff. But as a jazz player you can get away with all sorts of things . . .

To finish, then, what sorts of projects do you have lined up?

You see the problem with music like this is that there's no work, and there's no money, unless you're like these new, young people recreating the jazz of the '50s or '60s, or playing rock music with a saxophone solo on top and wearing trendy clothes. Unless you're doing that no record company is interested. I do a gig and get maybe forty quid. People think that because you can play a musical instrument you'll be getting lots of gigs and making loads of money. But it doesn't work like that, especially if you try and play your own way. If I played like Ray Brown I'd be working all the time, but I'd be bored out of my head. Anybody who just copies Ray Brown is a wanker as far as I'm concerned. You've got to find to your own sound. It's not about recreating someone else's sound, not for me, anyway.

What I do is what I want to do, and you can't get any better than that, can you? I'm very happy doing what I do, although I would be happier if I could get more gigs and play in front of more people. A lot of people use music to earn money and I think that's wrong. I think it's about serving the music instead of using the music. R

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Technology **without** tears

text: **Chris Blackford**

On a Friday night in Birmingham there is only one place to be if you're a serious follower of experimental music, but you'll need to be told exactly where the Cannonball pub on Adderley Street is because you're not likely to stumble across it. Tucked away in the backstreets of an Irish area of the city (soon to be called the "Media Quarter". . .) an intimate upper room has for some years now been the venue for many of the leading British players of jazz and improvised music. Evan Parker, Barry Guy, Paul Rutherford, Elton Dean, Paul Lytton is just the tip of an iceberg; the other notables will, I hope, forgive me if I omit to mention them for the sake of brevity.

No surprise, then, that Derbyshire-born Fred Thelonious Baker should also pay a welcome visit. His extraordinary versatility and inventiveness on electric and acoustic guitars and electric bass has begun to establish him as an important figure on the aforementioned music scene. His eclectic disposition is manifest in the range of musicians with whom he has collaborated: Chris McGregor, Maggie Nicols, John Etheridge, Harry Beckett, Allan Holdsworth, In Cahoots etc. Fred is keen to point out, however, that he is no session musician; he only works with "individuals", people who have something different to play, people who "inspire me to be creative".

Fred's father seems to have been the prime mover in his career. It was he who bestowed upon him that famous middle-name.

"The great thing about my dad was that everything was all around me when I was a kid. All this different music from very early classical music to rock. Obviously jazz was very important to him, too. I feel very fortunate that there weren't

those barriers put up between different types of music. You know, some people just get a classical education and others just tend to listen to pop music, the current thing. I was always encouraged to have an open mind to music, even if it was sort of out on a limb. I had this uncle who introduced me to African drumming via a few old 78s."

Such prescience would be well rewarded when Fred met the South African composer and pianist, Chris McGregor, and later worked with his big-band the Brotherhood of Breath in the '80s. McGregor is largely responsible for bringing African influences into improvised jazz, thus creating a compelling hybrid of rhythmic exuberance and rigorous experimentation. The distinctive talents of Evan Parker, Keith Tippett and Louis Moholo were all barely contained within the '70s version of the Brotherhood. When McGregor died last year his loss was felt by the jazz fraternity and everyone who was seriously interested in cross-cultural integration in music. Fred Baker speaks movingly about a popular musician and friend who clearly influenced his own development.

"Chris was an incredible person. We got on so well from the start. It was great that he came back to recognition in the '80s when the Brotherhood of Breath was rejuvenated. It was like the re-emergence of an important big-band music which came as a breath of fresh air. I remember I'd just got back to Paris after a tour in Italy with Elton (Dean), Phil (Miller) and Pip (Pyle) only to discover that Chris had died. It really wiped me away. I couldn't really accept it for a long time. I was talking about world affairs with Chris one minute and then the next thing . . . it was like a big part of me taken away. He was definitely a catalyst for many people in England and Europe."

Fred's solo gigs are a rare event and that's what the audience tonight has just been treated to. He brings with him a couple of guitars and a bass, plus various

Chris was an incredible person. We got on so well from the start. It was great that he came back to recognition in the '80s when the Brotherhood of Breath was rejuvenated.

effects pedals and sampling devices. His set ranges from the subtlest use of harmonics to full-bodied orchestral washes of sound. The music produced is difficult to classify. It is not dissimilar, as one might expect, to the guitar explorations of Bill Frisell and Pat Metheny who, like Fred, have eclectic tendencies where jazz is concerned; less expectedly, it reminds one of the Andy Summers/Robert Fripp collaborations (**I Advance Masked** (A&M, 1982) in particular) in terms of its sparse atmospherics and splashes of eastern colour.

Where a lot of studio guitar-technology experiments have an air of stuffy contrivance about them or run the risk of drifting off into ethereal, impressionistic soundscapes, Fred's playing retains its vitality and unpredictability because it is largely based on improvisation. This doesn't always make for a smooth

ride, however, where temperamental technology is involved; events aren't always seamlessly connected, but at least one gets the sense of a dynamic man-machine dialogue in progress.

"Yes, I have a love-hate relationship with the technology at times. I like playing in theatres and churches for their acoustics, but the nice thing about digital

I see technology used badly by characters who use it to try to disguise the fact that they can't play. I always maintain that everything I do is live.

equipment is that the reverbs and delays can recreate the effects of those acoustics in the intimacy of a pub. To do what I can do now would have been near impossible some years ago. You'd be talking banks of equipment up to the ceiling. Those sound-sampling delays offer you a lot of rhythmic possibilities and textures, but they are more difficult to use than people imagine. For a start you've got to be able to play in good time, and then you need the imagination to make up interesting samples to work with. I see technology used badly by characters who use it to try to disguise the fact that they can't play. I always maintain that everything I do is live. If I'm doing a little loop on an acoustic guitar or the bass, and I get it wrong, you'd hear it in a big way. It can be very frustrating when technology doesn't work for you."

Behind the technology is a disciplined craftsman. His adaptations of Monk's 'Round Midnight' and 'Blue Monk' for solo electric bass are cunning, often humourous, virtuosic displays. So too is his bass rendering of that famous Bach toccata.

"I was very interested in organ music when I was a kid. I loved its power. In fact the electric bass has probably got that range in it with all the harmonics. That's how the version of the Bach toccata came about. You need to be free to move in and out of these musics. When Jimi Hendrix came along my dad never tried to turn me off that sort of music. He just said: 'This guy is good.'"

More of Fred's bass playing will soon be available on a new In Cahoots live album which will be partly taken from their forthcoming Japanese tour. He has also recorded some guitar duets with Phil Miller which are still awaiting release. Then there's his work with Harry Beckett's Fluegelhorn Quartet, again soon to be released. Finally, the solo bass project.

"Although the instrument is now established as a solo jazz instrument," he sighs, "it's still difficult to get deals for it." Rest assured, though, if there's one bass player with the energy to clinch such a deal, that person's Fred Thelonious Baker. **R**

Postscript

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A Cinema of Excess

text: **Chris Blackford**

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The thinking behind this piece has been threefold. First: to provide those unfamiliar with Pasolini and his cinema with a basic introduction. Second: to review Naomi Greene's new study of Pasolini. Third: to add some of my own thoughts on Pasolini's cinema in the light of the recent "Pasolini Season" put on by WEAVE (West Midlands Experimental and Avant-Garde Video and Film Exhibition Consortium).

AUTHORITY AND SENSUALITY

Pier Paolo Pasolini, the Italian film director, is probably best remembered for two films: **The Gospel According to St. Matthew** (1964) and **Salo or The 120 Days of Sodom** (1975); the former received widespread acclaim, establishing him as a film-maker of international renown, whilst the latter received the sort of vilification reserved for few other films in the history of film-making. Pasolini's reputation is founded on such extremes of opinion. Controversy and scandal were the hallmark of a remarkable life and a tragic death.

But where to begin? The research and conjecture are considerable: theoretical as well as anecdotal, magazine interviews and television documentaries; a good deal of it in Italian and in recondite film/media journals. There is a Pasolini for everyone with the urge to research. Pasolini the poet, the novelist, the essayist, the journalist, the film maker, the Marxist, the heretic, the homosexual, the martyr. Nowhere is the fascination,

Scans: *above* Pier Paolo Pasolini
p18 burial. **Theorem**
p 21 **Accattone** (Franco Citti)

the intrigue greater than in the circumstances surrounding his brutal assassination in November 1975, allegedly at the hands of a young male prostitute. His death is cinema's equivalent to the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

Naomi Greene's recent addition to the research, **Pier Paolo Pasolini: Cinema as Heresy** (Princeton University Press, 1990), undertakes to draw together the various Pasolinis by observing them, as it were, through the viewfinder of his cinematic output. She begins by describing his childhood, his birth in Casara delle Delize in 1922 ("the year Mussolini came to power") into a "petit-bourgeois" family, "marked by what he called 'dignified poverty'." His parents' influence troubled him for the rest of his life, surfacing under various guises in most of his films. His mother was a schoolteacher, "of modest rural stock"; her gentleness, it seems, contrasted strongly with his father's authority, a man of "minor nobility" from Ravenna. Pasolini says that his whole life was

influenced by the scenes my father made with my mother. These scenes awakened in me the desire to die. . . He reproached her with having her head in the clouds. The simple truth is that he was a Fascist, she was not. Being in the clouds meant, for him, being anti-conformist, in disagreement with the laws of the State, with the ideas of those in power. (p.4)

Likewise, early childhood was a time remembered for first sexual stirrings, a nascent awareness of his own homosexuality, experienced whilst watching

some young boys at play.

Now I know that it was an intensely sensual feeling. If I re-experience it I feel precisely in my insides the melting, sadness, and violence of desire. It was the sense of the unobtainable, of the carnal - a sense for which no name had yet been invented. . . something which was like a tickling, a seduction, a humilation. (p.5)

Years later, in his twenties, he recalls at the age of five, his feelings at the sight of a gruesome film poster of a man being mauled by a tiger.

He (the young adventurer) lay with his head down, almost in the position of a woman, defenceless,nude. Meanwhile the animal was ferociously swallowing him. . . I felt a shiver within me like a kind of surrender. Meanwhile I began to wish that I myself were the explorer being devoured alive by the beast. (p.6)

Images of violent death, of surrender, of sublimation in death were to haunt his cinema in the years to come.

THE LOWEST OF THE LOW

Pasolini's first film as a director, **Accattone**, was made in 1961, though he had worked as a co-scriptwriter for Frederico Fellini, Mauro Bolognini and Franco Rossi, amongst others, in the mid-late 50s. The film was set in the *borgate*, the poor, outlying districts of Rome, populated by the sub-proletariat. Pasolini had lived in these districts and knew them well from his early days in Rome where he had moved from Casara. His early novels were also set in the *borgate*. Although the film shares some of the Italian neorealist cinema preoccupations with naturalistic settings, the use of non-professional actors, the discourse of ordinary people, themes of poverty and injustice etc., Pasolini was keen to distance himself from that movement, at least stylistically.

The main feature of neorealism is the long take; the camera sits in one place and films a scene as it would be in real life. . . Whereas I never use a long take (or virtually never). I hate naturalness. I reconstruct everything. (p.41)

Moreover, and more importantly, Greene claims that behind Pasolini's antinaturalism is "a desire to exchange the social and historical world of the neorealists for a universe that opens upon the sacred, the mythic, the epic."

Accattone is clearly imbued with an overbearing mood of tragedy, of fatalism. Its protagonist, or anti-hero, the pimp, Accattone, is a desperate man represented as the incorrigible victim of sub-proletarian impoverishment. The apparent irreversibility of his circumstances is not explained sociologically/historically, it is a given we either accept as the fixed order of things, or in rejecting it we refuse to engage with this universe. And therein lies the film's central problem for many critics. Those of a Marxist persuasion have disapproved of the film's poetic and fatalistic vision because it removed the impetus for social change; other critics have been shocked by the reverential treatment of characters they

perceived as amoral, depraved, "consumed by instincts and sensuality".

To a 1990s audience, enlightened by feminism and feminist film theory and films, this film's representation of women, in particular prostitutes, must constitute an important site for debate. Naomi Greene, however, chooses to ignore this sort of debate. She claims that Accattone because he is a pimp is "the lowest of the low". Perhaps he is, within a general moral hierarchy operating outside the film, but within the film itself it is the prostitutes who are the lowest of the low; they, after all, work for people like Accattone. It is they who endure the scorn, the derision and physical abuse of the male characters; they who are represented as scheming when they report a pimp to the police. The decline of Stella from virtuous innocent to virtual prostitute (she escapes from the clutches of her first and only client after Accattone has encouraged her to work for him) is not shot with a feel for epic tragedy, nor transformed by the grandeur of Bach's music. Those techniques, that music, are reserved for Accattone who gets the full heroic treatment. If James Dean's rebel appears somewhat chastened by experience, then Pasolini's is a rebel without a chance. Death is the only escape route offered to Accattone, and when it comes it is difficult to grieve over one so exploitative; perhaps pity is all we can feel.

The most memorable moment in the film - a piece of Pasolini's burgeoning cinematic brilliance - is where Accattone, in a fit of jealousy, believing he has lost Stella to a couple of rich men in a café, runs down to the water's edge, washes his face and then falls forward into the sand. When he looks up there is a mask of sand clinging to his face, giving the impression of some hideous facial deformity. The face fills the screen. We see the whites of the eyes. For a moment the inner pain, the desolation, the self-loathing and feelings of inadequacy, are externalised.

FRAMING THE DIVINE

Pasolini's Bethlehem is a dump. The slow pans of crumbling 'architecture', the lingering close-ups of its impoverished inhabitants and their shabby attire tell us more about the place than any amount of false histrionics and syrupy music one is likely to encounter in a Hollywood production on a similar theme. We observe them in their habitat, often in silence, with just the roving eye of Pasolini's camera to guide us. On a hillside a group of boys plays a game, while a listless, unshaven Joseph is visited by an undistinguished angel, adding a touch of low-key mysticism to the proceedings. Later, an even more undistinguished Satan tempts Christ in the desert.

Using a reverential style for The Gospel was gilding the lily: it came out rhetoric. Reverential technique and style in Accattone went fine, but applied to a sacred text they were ridiculous; so I got discouraged and was just about to give the whole thing up, and then. . . I threw over all my technical preconceptions. I started using the zoom, I used new camera movements, new frames which were not reverential, but almost documentary. A completely new style emerged. (p.75)

The scene depicting the Pharisees' trial of Christ is a masterly use of documentary *cinéma vérité* techniques. A hand-held camera struggles from a distance, a tantalising distance, to get a clearer view of the action between the heads of the crowd. At one point all we get is the back of somebody's head. The sacrilege! How dare we not see one of the major points of the Passion! The effect is to put us there amongst the other straining rubbernecks in the crowd.

Stylistic techniques apart, there were many astonished, not to say outraged that an avowed Marxist should have made the film in the first place, but as Greene claims: "it was Pasolini's belief that, at the deepest level, Marxism and Christianity had profound affinities. . . perhaps only these two forces stood opposed to the materialist values of neocapitalism." Pasolini's Christ is didactic, a revolutionary. "Anyone," says Pasolini, "who walks up to a couple of people and says, 'Drop your nets and follow me' is a total revolutionary." Christ's injunction to "love thy neighbour as thyself" is really an injunction to "make structural (i.e., political) reforms." Christ was to be seen as a member of the sub-proletariat like his followers. Pasolini argued that a historical relationship existed between Christ and the proletariat:

he would not have done anything if he had not been followed by proletarians. The Pharisees would not have killed him. And the proletariat would have remained in an unhearing darkness without the revolutionary teachings of Christ. (p.75)

In fact, it is precisely the representation of Christ's followers that attracts some of the most valid criticism directed towards the film. As Greene rightly points out:

the silence of Christ's followers in ***Il Vangelo*** *helps reduce them to an indistinguishable mass. . . Totally dominated and overwhelmed by Christ. . . One is left to wonder how his mute and passive followers will be able to further his teachings once he himself is gone.* (p79)

Clearly there is only so much one can do with a non-professional cast, and for the most part Pasolini's inventive camera techniques and striking photography draw attention away from their shortcomings, but a good deal of the credit must go to that recurring theme from Bach's **St Matthew Passion** for lending an air of the sublime to some scenes which might otherwise be construed as dull.

THE CINEMA OF POETRY

By far the most taxing chapter in this book is the one entitled, 'Theory: Towards a Poetics of Cinema'. Here, we confront Pasolini the film theorist/essayist and it seems that he is no less controversial in this respect. Readers without the basics in film theory, and, in particular, film semiology, will find the going tough, but Greene does her best to straighten out a lot of convoluted academic debate. At the heart of the chapter is Pasolini's notion of the 'cinema of poetry'. Theorist, Gilles

Deleuze:

The camera does not simply give a vision of the character and his world; it imposes another vision in which the first vision is transformed and reflected. This doubling is what Pasolini calls 'free indirect subjectivity'... it is a question of going beyond the subjective and the objective towards a pure Form which rises up as an autonomous vision of the content. (p.117)

This "other film" above and beyond the one involving the characters and their world is concerned with film *form* and what Greene calls "stylistic liberty"; this, she says, "lies at the very heart of the 'cinema of poetry' for, through it, the director creates another film, an 'authentic' and 'irrational' film that springs from cinema's deepest, and most essential, poetic sub-stratum." The protagonist of this "other film" is *style* "that calls attention to itself by breaking the rules." Here Pasolini gives some examples of how he trangresses the rules, of how he draws attention (our attention as audience) to his expressive use of the camera.

the abuse of the zoom with its long focuses which adhere to things and expand them like loaves with too much yeast, the continuous and deceptively casual shots against the light which blind the camera, the tremblings of the hand-held camera, the exasperated tracking-shots, the mistakes in editing done for expressive reasons, the irritating opening shots, the shots held interminably on the same image, etc. (p.120)

ALLEGORY AND IDEOLOGY

In **Theorem** (1968) Pasolini returns to the divine, but instead locates it within the world of the bourgeoisie. It is arguably his most highly stylised film and, as Greene observes, this has a lot to do with his first significant use of professional actors, in particular, the English star Terence Stamp and the Italian 'sexbomb' Silvana Mangano. Their polished acting helps to banish "any trace of spontaneity, any hint of naturalism".

The narrative, which is the least bewildering aspect of the film, involves a divine visitor (played by Stamp) who enters the home of a bourgeois family

(mother, father, son, daughter, servant) makes love to each of them in turn and changes their lives forever. Pasolini's camera is clinical, his mise-en-scene ordered, often symmetrical. The acting is largely understated and for periods of the film carried out in silence, adding a further, hightened sense of unreality. Mangano (the mother) is here remote and strained, her beauty almost mannequin-like. In her 'love scene' the camera hovers above her nakedness, her repressed passion, as the visitor surveys her with calm detachment. The love scenes involving the visitor and the son and father (the latter is implied rather than shown) are similarly devoid of outward passion. Needless to say, the homosexual content of the film, particularly since it is associated with divinity, caused a scandal. The Pope certainly thought that it was well out of order!

The visitor leaves without ceremony; unable to cope without him, each of their lives is shattered, except the servant's. The mother picks up young men for sex, hoping to relive her experience with the visitor; the father hands over his company to the control of the workers; the son becomes a crazed 'artist', urinating on his canvasses; the daughter becomes catatonic and is taken away to an asylum. "Nothing will fill the void within them since, in Pasolini's words, 'the bourgeoisie has lost the sense of the sacred'."

Pasolini has constructed an elaborate allegory (or theorem) to make this point; some might argue rather indulgently elaborate. It is a damning indictment of bourgeois camplacency conducted in the most detached and calculated manner. But the film is also another fine example of his 'cinema of poetry', functioning at the level of form over and beyond content. Two sequences involving the servant, Emelia, who has become something of a mystic and miracle-worker subsequent to the departure of the visitor, are among the most mysterious in post-war cinema (perhaps in recent decades only Tarkovsky's **Mirror** rivals them for enigmatic beauty). The first is the levitation scene where she is seen floating above a derelict barn in the peasant village; the second, sees her being buried up to her eyes so that before dying she will shed tears that will become a source of life. According to Greene, Pasolini regarded this scene as the most optimistic in the film, saying that it reminds us "that preceding civilisations have not disappeared, but are only buried. Thus, peasant civilisation remains buried under the world of workers, under industrial civilisation."

PRIMORDIAL PASSION

If passion in **Theorem** is repressed, in **Medea** (1969) it is overwhelming. The film opens with a fertility rite: ritual human sacrifice . A quite extraordinary scene where a boy is crucified and then dismembered before the congregated tribe. It is Pasolini's attempt at bringing to life one of the aforementioned "preceding civilisations". In this case it is the Greek Euripidean myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece. Jason is promised a kingdom if he can obtain the Golden Fleece which is the sacred artifact of Medea's ancient religion. She falls in love with him and

abandons her people, stealing the Fleece and escaping with Jason and her brother. In order to consolidate their escape she murders her brother, throwing his dismembered limbs from the chariot, knowing that the pursuing men of her tribe will stop to collect them for burial. There is also a suggestion that she fears a sexual liason between Jason and her brother. The couple settle in Corinth where Jason is not rewarded with his kingdom and Medea gives up the robes of her religion. Later, Jason plans to abandon her for a young princess in Corinth, but the latter jumps to her death from the city walls after Medea presents her with the robes of her ancient religion. Now that Medea cannot possess Jason she stabs their two sons and walks into the raging fire she has started.

The twists and turns of the narrative cohere around the central theme that Medea's fate is sealed by a love that destroys, a love that is greater even than Death itself. Pasolini avoids the possible absudity of so many excesses by evoking an authentic sense of the primordial, of elemental forces, through the choice of vivid costumes and desert locations. More than these, however, it is the persona of Medea that ignites the film's destructive passion. Opera star Maria Callas is perfect in the central role. The camera worships her, fetishizes that splendidly expressive face from numerous angles, drawing out the extremes of emotion.

Pasolini's on-going battle with fellow Marxists over the role of ideology in his films was, of course, not resolved with **Medea**. Whilst critics of **Theorem** accused him of promoting a decididly non-Marxist route to social redemption in that the bourgeoisie "stood accused not of class exploitation but of spiritual emptiness", critics of **Medea** claimed that he had deserted the world of ideology and dialectics in search of a nostalgic "quest for archaic and mythic civilisations"; that he had "escaped. . .into an ahistorical, aestheticized world of Absolutes - a world where Death, Sacredness, and Myth ruled supreme." In his response he claimed that overtly political cinema merely "vulgarizes and simplifies problems" serving only "to quiet the bad conscience of the bourgeoisie". This is Pasolini the stylist talking; the Pasolini who would never curb cinematic innovation for ideological dogma.

THE "WILL TO EXCESS"

Naomi Greene concludes her study with an epilogue in which she attempts to pin down the personality behind these provocative films. Clearly, Pasolini was a man surrounded by scandal, in his personal life (he was convinced that the Italian public, urged on by the Italian press saw his homosexuality as "the very sign of an abominable human type") as well as in his career as a writer and a filmmaker. **Salo**, his last film, undoubtedly caused the most scandal, hence it is rarely seen. Those who have seen it will doubtless agree that its harrowing scenes of torture and coprophagy are not easily forgotten. Greene quotes a comment made by Pasolini to his friend Gideon Bachman that **Salo** "goes so far beyond the limits that those who habitually speak ill of me will have to find new terms."

Is it possible that the act of scandalizing is an act that the author accomplishes so that it rebounds upon himself? An act of sadomasochism, let's say, or of self-punishment? An expressive act in that it's a public punishment of oneself? Therefore the value of scandal would not reside in the form or content of a work but (in the way) that it rebounds upon the author himself? (p.221)

It is clear from these two quotes (both from Pasolini) that he was obviously aware of the controversial impact that his films would have in Catholic Italy. Not only that, but there is more than a suggestion that he actually relished the scandal and controversy, that it gave him some sort of creative impetus. Greene agrees that there is this masochistic streak in Pasolini's attitude to his work and the public's response to it. She speaks of his "will to excess"; his friend the writer, Alberto Moravia, suggests that Pasolini's revolt "is not really political, but comes from a homosexual or ideological malaise". Perhaps one could go further in describing this "will to excess" as a form of exhibitionism brought about by an egotistic impulse. Pasolini was nothing if not a masterly self-publicist.

Whatever the impulse or "malaise" behind the movie camera it is probably less important than the images on the screen, and Pasolini has left a formidable legacy where these are concerned. His films still retain that immediate visceral impact and his passion for innovation is still an inspiration to contemporary filmmakers. Although Naomi Greene has obviously fallen under the spell of Pasolini's cinema (and the temptation is indeed great) she manages the debate with dexterity and even-handedness, giving space even to those views which might be considered homophobic and keeping the whole martyr/cult business at a healthy arms length. Her study radiates commitment for its subject where too much film criticism plods a weary and arcanc course. One hopes that it will introduce Pasolini's work to yet a wider audience.

CONCLUDING NOTE

Talking of a wider audience, The British Film Institute and Argos Films have released two Pasolini films, **Medea** and **Oedipus Rex**, on video as part of their growing Connoisseur Video collection. Well worth investigating, I should have thought. R

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madrid

city of cars, hot chocolate and *churros*

text: **Kevin McCarrick**

Having to spend twenty four hours in Madrid is a depressing thought. Without a doubt after spending a day there you'd want to stay longer - almost everybody does. After a week you'd probably hate the place or have decided, as many foreigners do, to live there for a while. For a native English speaker Madrid is a remarkably easy place to live. The enormous number of private English schools and academies make it practically impossible to be out of work.

MEET THE *MADRILENOS* . . .

The obvious thing to do given the opportunity to spend a day in Madrid (occasionally one of the days out offered by 'our Cilla') would be to go to the famous Prado museum (definitely a must for a longer stay) or the Rastro flea market (keep a tight grip on your bag there) or any of those other places that Baedeker recommends. A more relaxing way of passing the time would be to just spend the day wandering around the streets, drinking in the myriad bars and, most entertaining of all observing the *Madrilenos* (a kind of super- Spaniard with all the exaggerated qualities we like to associate with the Spanish: loud, brash, smartly dressed, proud of Madrid, proud of being Spanish and above all intensely proud to be a *Madrileno*).

Anyone who has spent any time in Madrid must at one point or another have longed for the relatively quiet streets of London or even Birmingham.This may of course seem very hard to believe but Madrid is so painfully noisy nearly everywhere and nearly all of the time. Why, you may ask, do the *Madrilenos* insist on going everywhere by car when they have a superb underground system that shows up the London "tube" to be the expensive, filthy and generally unpleasant transport system it really is? The answer might be that the Spanish have only in recent years become car owners to the same extent as other European countries. And nothing is going to take away their newly acquired status symbols as true members of industrialised Europe. Asking a *Madrileno* to leave his car at home one

day a week because his registration plate begins with an odd or an even number (a suggestion made by a leading German pollution expert drafted in by the city council) would be unthinkable. It would be tantamount to cutting off his manhood in public! They would simply refuse, just as they refuse to wear crash helmets on motorbikes and just as they refuse to obey parking restrictions.

CITY FOR SORE EYES

To make matters worse the Spanish insist on honking their car horns as soon as the traffic lights turn green which means that at times it is impossible to have a conversation while walking along Madrid's famous Gran Via because of the noise level. The quite astonishing number of cars in Madrid is the prime reason for an ugly smog which engulfs the city in the summer months and can be clearly seen from the top of one of the many skyscrapers. It is evidence of the growing ecological nightmare facing Spain but which it apparently refuses to acknowledge or do anything about. On leaving a bus or train entering Madrid the pollution will literally sting your eyes until, like the rest of its inhabitants, you get used to it.

Trying to escape the noise in the city is quite a task but not impossible.The most inviting place to escape the cars is the Retiro park in the east of Madrid, within walking distance of the city centre. Most people swarm there in the hot summer months: the tourists to stare at the *Madrilenos* and the *Madrilenos* to stare at the tourists.

BARS

People in Madrid are fiercely fashion conscious. Sunday afternoon, throughout the year, is the time to dress the children up in their Sunday best and parade them and the whole family (granny, aunts, uncles, second cousins five times removed) up and down the main streets, and the time to drink and be seen in your favourite bar. The favourite place to see and be seen in Madrid is the Castellano, a road running up almost the entire length of Madrid and crammed with fashionable bars and cafés. Unlike Britain Spain doesn't have antiquated licensing laws so whole families can eat and drink with much more freedom and in far more pleasant surroundings than in Britain. The number and variety of bars and cafés in Madrid is bewildering.

. . . AND BEGGARS

Beneath the very obvious affluence, and decadence, enjoyed by a great number of *Madrilenos* there is a shocking amount of poverty and deprivation. Anyone bothered at being stopped by a beggar in London should avoid Madrid. Like anything else, one can become used to it and no one in Madrid really seems too upset at the sight of people begging. It is quite common to see a man kneeling in the middle of the pavement with a picture of his children and his "social security" papers stating his unemployment status.

Beggars enter the carriages on the underground and announce to the passengers their harrowing stories of poverty and desperation, usually swearing on their

mothers' graves that the money will not be used to buy drugs or alcohol. The passengers on one of Madrid's underground lines, the one that happens to be nearest its largest prison, regularly have to listen to the stories of newly released prisoners. Quite often they are from the south of Spain and genuinely need to beg for money so that they can return to the south. Unlike other beggars they normally end their tale of desperation by 'reassuring' the passengers that they were definitely not convicted of murder or drug- related offences. They never actually admit to their crimes, either. Being approached by a beggar in Madrid can be quite an unsettling experience. It's not uncommon to be approached late at night with the ambiguous threat: "We don't want to hurt you, but . . ." Despite all the stories Madrid is quite a safe place after dark and moving about at night is far less dangerous than in some areas of Birmingham, for example. Nevertheless, it has to be said that parts of Madrid are horribly seedy and depressing in comparison with the affluent areas which are what most visitors to Madrid see.

STAMINA AND SPEED

While Britain (well, at least some of it) is sipping Horlicks and watching Newsnight Madrid's nightlife is just waking up. Bars rarely close before two or three in the morning and that's when the nightclubs and discos begin to fill up. Apart from a lot of cash (although not always essential) what is absolutely necessary for a night out in Madrid is a lot of stamina. At the weekend, a usual night out with friends, including a meal and a disco or club with various bars in between, can take up as many hours as a working day. The traditional way to end a night out in Madrid is to go to drink hot chocolate with *churros* - short sticks of fried batter. A wonderful way to end a night out. During the summer when many of the *Madrilenos* enjoy a much shorter working day, some change their sleeping pattern to allow them to spend the whole night out enjoying the terraces and bars of Madrid and taking the inevitable hot chocolate and *churros*; afterwards they get off to work and then spend the afternoon and early evening in bed. With such a demanding nightlife it's not really surprising to see the large amount, and easy availability, of cocaine, speed and various other stimulant drugs in the bars in the centre. After all, the possession of small quantities of cocaine and other drugs for personal use is legal in Spain.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF TOURIST

The Spanish are eager to win back the tourists lost through the declining quality of the traditional beach package holiday. They are also keen to win back a different kind of tourist: one that won't be scrapping outside the disco on the first night of their 18-30 holiday. In fact, the Spanish tourist board is confidently selling Madrid as *that* alternative to the beach holiday. And really, there's no reason why it shouldn't be. For all its contrasts and idiosyncracies, and probably *because* of them, Madrid is still a most stimulating place, whether you intend just to visit - or to stay. **R**

2-3-5

or A Game of Several Halves

I'm hungry again. I'm always hungry. I'd have cheese on toast or something if I didn't have to do the washing up. Earlier I went into the toilet for a piss and put the window on notch three. The lights were off in the Wing-half's house. I put my ear up to the opening and heard moaning and groaning of an ecstatic nature. She was obviously getting the full treatment. She makes a lot of noise for a small woman. I do hopes he watches his back, he's got an important match tomorrow.

Sometimes I return there in my imagination and torch the place; and sometimes I return there and torch the place with the old geezer in it. Some things I can still remember: his arthritic joints curled around the putter as he handed it to me; his breath, wheezy and reeking of bloater paste. He certainly put me through it, barring the way out with a sinister grin made up of pearly white teeth and chapped lips. He made me stay there until I had executed the stroke to his satisfaction, put the mouldy ball through a narrow gap in the converging walls. He kept sending me back with the putter from his shed where he stood like a hunched sentry. "*Without*, touching the sides," he breathed, watching the fear grow in my eyes. There was pleasure nestled in the crows feet around his.

The skin got thicker and wrinklier on the top of my hot chocolate as I stared at the bucket with the lasagne dishes inside. One of the waitresses saw what I was up to and hurried past. She didn't want to get involved. That was the top and bottom of it. Nobody wanted to get involved over half a dozen unwashed lasagne dishes, no matter how hard the stuff was baked on. They wanted an easy life, anything for a quiet life. Avoid controversy and don't look confrontation in the face if you want a quiet life. Of course they knew the Kid was a complete bastard. Everybody knew that. It went without saying. He was just a teenager with a constellation of spots. He worked the evening shifts, unsocial hours, so they didn't want to lose him. It didn't matter to them how much he wound me up, so long as he did the shifts nobody else wanted.

I wound my finger round the chocolate and lifted off the skin. I tried to shake it off, but it hung there like an old plaster. It was about to happen again. I could hear it coming, any moment now. The sound of worry going round and round and round inside my head, like helicopter blades. I knew I'd have to get outside in the fresh air before I burst into tears.

"We can use my garage as a goal," I said.

The Wing-half juggled the ball with both feet, then flicked it up over his head and trapped it on the back of his neck.

"I said we can use my garage as a goal if you like?"

He dipped his shoulders slightly, letting the ball roll down his back and over his rump, where he backheeled it over his head and trapped it on top of his left foot.

"What do you think?"

"Use what you bloody-well like for all I care," he said, indifferently.

"I'll just roll this out, then," I said, rolling out the strip of old carpet so that I could dive.

I love making these preparations.

The Wing-half put his foot on the ball and folded his arms. "Well be quick about it, I've got to read a bedtime story in a few minutes."

I glanced at my watch anxiously. It was nearly 7pm. Enough time for a few games of three-and-in, except that it was me that was always in because the Wing-half hated going in goal.

He began jogging round the car park, playing one-twos with himself off the kerb, keeping me in suspense for the first shot. I felt fatter than ever, looking at him so slim. For a moment I panicked, thinking it was my dad's car about to turn into the garages, but thankfully it was another Maxi heading off up to the tip. He'd have gone mad if it had been him. He only painted the garage door a couple of nights ago.

It took the Wing-half a bit longer than usual to score the first three. He was obviously enjoying the challenge because he seemed to have forgotten about the bedtime story. I was enjoying myself, too. I was playing well, so I wasn't going to remind him.

He came racing towards me and blasted a shot which struck my knee and deflected upwards. Somehow he managed to swivel and volley the rebound back at me. I dived instinctively to the left and pulled off a point-blank save with the fingertips of my right hand. I rolled over and sat up, feeling proud of myself, only to see the Wing-half, face expressionless, standing with his hands on his hips. The ball was nowhere to be seen.

"Here, I'll give you a leg-up," he said, indifferently. "I've got a match tomorrow so I'm not getting up on that bloody roof of yours."

I put my foot in the palms of his linked hands and clambered uncomfortably on to the roof. The ball was away down the end of the garages. I was amazed how far it had gone considering it had only brushed my fingertips. I took my time getting it to savour the sense of achievement. If I was going to get myself back together again I was going to have to pull off more saves like that, I thought. This was the sort of save you could build on, get some confidence to get things back together again from. The Wing-half would have to start taking me seriously after a save like that. Everyone would.

I scooped up the ball and swaggered back across the roof. "Save of the fucking season, that was!" I bellowed, as I got to the roof's edge. I looked down. The Wing-half was nowhere to be seen. My dad was kneeling on the strip of carpet. He

looked up. He hates swearing. There were flakes of green paint in the palm of his hand.

Footsteps in the snow. Visible through the lower half of the back door window. The Wing-half's wife is standing there in a kimono looking out. I don't know what nationality she is, but it isn't English. A lot of footballers marry foreign women. Even full-backs. Apparently they prefer Chinese women, or even Thai, if they can get an introduction. Don't ask me why.

There's mud on the mat by the door. It seems to be a fair enough place for it to be, but she doesn't think so.

"Did you bring this mud in!" she shouts.

"What mud?" It's his voice from the living room.

"The mud on this mat in here!"

The Wing-half comes into the kitchen. I can see his navy blue tracksuit bottoms with white stripes down the legs. He's got new trainers on, too. I think some shop pays him to wear them.

"I haven't been out this morning," he says.

"Well somebody's brought it in."

"Perhaps it was Emily?"

I have a job to stop laughing. Emily's his young daughter who's hasn't started to walk yet. I move further in under the table, sensing they'll be fireworks.

"Well *I'm* not cleaning it, if that's what you think," she says, pushing past him. A flowery talc smell wafts over to me as she passes in front of the table. I catch sight of her painted toenails, like red petals, and smooth calves. "The trouble with you is that you spend too much time with that idiot next door," she says.

"What do you mean?" he says.

"You shouldn't encourage him. His parents are old and they've got enough to worry about without you interfering. He's nearly as old as you. Anyway, I'm going to get dressed. Clean that mess up."

"Oh, shut your mouth," he says.

She goes out of the kitchen and he walks over to the door and looks out. Now's the time I decide. I launch myself at his feet. He's so surprised that he farts, but there's no smell. I hug his legs tighter. He tries to shake me off.

"Get off, you fat bastard," he says. "Stop it before I kick your teeth down the back of your throat."

I got a hedge ticket last week to see him play. Some bloke and his kid saw me, but said nothing. He threads passes through gaps that other players don't see. In the local paper it says he prefers to have a quiet night in before a match. He's a good strong tackler and loves to move up in support of the attack. They say he has the gift of bursting through from midfield to snatch a goal.

My bristles are catching on his polyester tracksuit bottoms. I should have had a shave, but I couldn't be bothered.

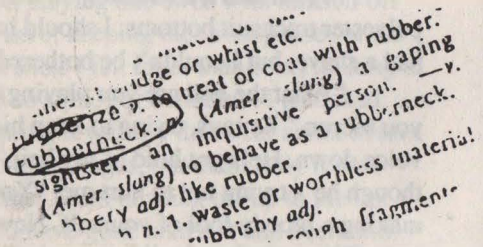
"What the hell are you playing at, you moron," he says, trying to keep his voice down. He's got hold of my hair, though he's trying not to hurt me. "You're making a bloody fool of yourself. Now sod off home before I tell her you brought that mud in."

He pulls my head back and looks into my eyes. I don't want to be like this,

you know, I'm thinking. There are things missing and I've looked through the lost property God knows how many times. I've seen old plimsolls that don't match and a cricket box with somebody's pube in it. You can say what you like. I'm still looking for the things that I've lost. Sometimes it's like a chest of drawers without handles. The Kid told everyone that after the accident when they removed the helmet a brain rolled out the size of a Smartie. There must have been pain, but I don't remember that, either. I just want to be who I was and do what I did, whatever that was.

I tell him the first thing that comes into my head. "The footballers of yesteryear grew sideburns. They were bushy affairs and needed due care and attention. The messier ones came down below the jawline. Perhaps a pair with points, like boots, angled at the corner of the mouth, would suit you?" **R**

text: **Chris Blackford**


bridge or whist etc.
rubberize v. to treat or coat with rubber.
rubberneck. (Amer. slang) a gaping sightseer, an inquisitive person. —v. (Amer. slang) to behave as a rubberneck.
-bbery adj. like rubber.
n. 1. waste or worthless material
-bbishy adj.

. . . short ideas repeated
Massage the brain . . .
Robert Ashley, 1979

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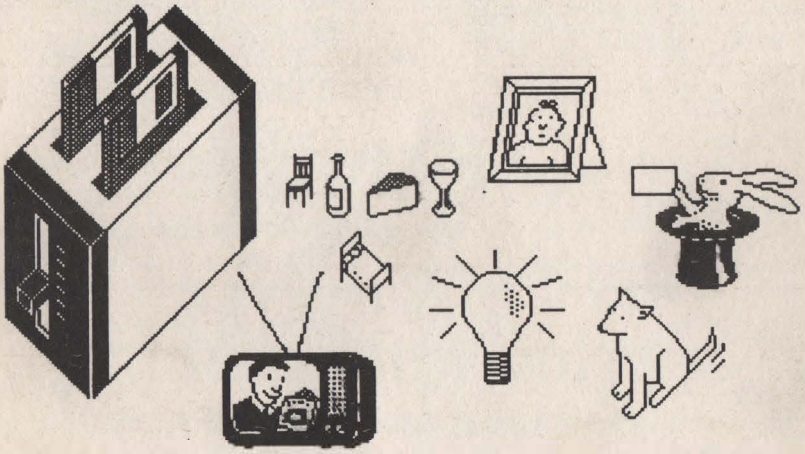
OPEN Mon-Fri 8.00am-9.00pm
Sat & Sun 9.00am-9pm

Aston Street, Birmingham, B4.

ASTON TRIANGLE OFF LICENCE

OPEN Mon-Thurs 12.00pm-10.30pm
Fri & Sat 12.00pm - 11.00pm
Sun 12-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm

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